15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

182 595 Because of the firm right of women over the residence, Khasi polygyny can never be a clearly distinguishable institution, and has no operational advantage in the social and economic fields; the situation is very similar with lovers' relations and illegal marriages. By polygyny the man achieves no additional economic advantage, nor does he increase his social status or prestige; rather the reverse, for I observed that the polygynyst was regarded as a somewhat ludicrous or tragic figure. As for the woman, she is placed slightly at a disadvantage since the husband's economic activities are not concentrated on her household. However, even many legally-married wives are separated or divorced, so that such disadvantages are not only experienced by the wives of polygynists. The social disadvantage of being secondary wife is not serious, firstly, because wives, whether first or secondary, have social and economic independence—they do not belong to the husband as in the case of patrilineal systems. Secondly, the significance attached to the legal marriage institution is not so great, so that the handicap of being the secondary wife is not severe. What is most important, furthermore, is that her slightly inferior status does in no ways affect the next generation. Indeed such children, including [848] those of premarital or illegal relations, suffer no serious social dis- [851] advantage, though they are nominally distinguishable from legitimate children. From this it is clear that the effectiveness of legitimate marriage, and paternal recognition are rather limited among the Khasi.

Thus, Khasi polygyny differs greatly from the polygyny of other societies in terms of its operation and of its form. It also differs in the incentive to its practice. Among the Garo and many other societies, the practice of polygyny usually depends on a man's economic capability, but among the Khasi, it appears rather to depend on his 182 whim. Khasi husbands are notorious for their heavy drinking and 593 neglect of wife and children. Some of them told me that their earnings, • 733 their children and everything they acquired go to their wife or sister, leaving them with nothing; therefore they should at least have freedom to enjoy their life. This freedom seemed to mean women and drink. I am not sure how far this explanation is true, but it seems to justify their behaviour to a certain extent. I do not mean that this is the general characteristic of the Khasi husbands, but some such tendency is to be observed. Actually I often heard wives complain of their husbands' drinking and running after women, and was asked "Are your Japanese husbands also like that?", "What is the good of having a husband!" then comes divorce . . .

182 562 593 On the contrary, women placed at an advantage by residence and matrilineal inheritance, are required always to be on their best behaviour. There are very strict rules governing the behaviour of Khasi women. They are supposed not to drink, smoke, or play with